In the claims:

     1.   (Currently amended) A latching mechanism <u>adapted</u> for coupling two nestable shanks in a selected extension therebetween, each shank having at least one aperture along a longitudinal extent thereof said latching mechanism comprising:

a housing;

an aperture in said housing;

a locking pin for extension through said aperture[[s]], said pin having first and

     second ends;

a pivot arm within said housing having first and second ends, said pivot arm first

     end being pivotable about an axis within said housing with said pivot arm

     second end attached to said locking pin;

first means for biasing said pivot arm to urge said locking pin second end towards a

     position within said housing;

a lever arm for bearing against said first end of said locking pin;

second means for biasing said lever arm to a first position bearing against said first

     end of said locking pin to urge said second end of said locking pin in

     extension outside said housing, said lever arm presenting a first end for user

     manipulation, a manipulation of said first end urging said lever arm away

     from said first position to allow said first bias means to urge said locking pin

     second end within said housing:

said latching mechanism adapted for placement along ~~the first~~ <u>one of the</u> shank<u>s</u>

     with an aperture of the respective nested shanks aligned therebetween,

wherein said latching mechanism joins the ~~first and second~~ shanks upon said movement of said locking pin second end in extension outside said housing and through the aligned apertures of the ~~first and second~~ shanks, the ~~first and second~~ nested shanks releasable upon movement of the locking pin second end towards said position within said housing and ~~without~~ <u>outside</u> the aligned shank apertures.

2.   (Currently amended) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 1 wherein said first bias means comprises a spring within said housing, a movement of said spring to a normal position biases said pivot arm ~~to said position~~ wherein said second end of said locking pin is urged towards said position within said housing.

3.   (Original) The latching ~~means~~ <u>mechanism</u> as claimed in claim 1 wherein said second bias means comprises a spring within said housing, a movement of said second <u>bias means</u> spring towards a normal position urging said lever arm into said first position bearing against said first end of said locking pin.

4.   (Original) The latching ~~means~~ <u>mechanism</u> as claimed in claim 2 wherein said second bias means comprises a ~~second~~ spring within said housing, a movement of said second <u>bias means</u> spring towards a normal position urging said lever arm into said first position bearing against said first end of said locking pin.

5.   (Original) The latching ~~means~~ <u>mechanism</u> as claimed in claim 4 wherein said bias of said second bias means is greater than said first bias means on said locking pin, whereby to urge said second end of said locking pin outside said housing.

6.   (Cancelled.)

7.   (Cancelled.)

8.   (Cancelled.)

9.   (Cancelled.)

10. (Currently amended) A latching mechanism <u>adapted</u> for coupling two nestable shanks in a selected extension therebetween, each shank having at least one aperture along a longitudinal extent thereof, said latching mechanism comprising:

a housing:

a locking pin having a free end for extension outside said housing;

first means for biasing said free end of said locking pin towards a first normal locking position outside said housing, <u>said first bias means comprising:</u>[[;]]

   <u>a first spring;</u>

   <u>an arm associated with said first spring, said first spring urging said</u> <u>arm against said locking pin in manner to urge said free end of</u> <u>said locking pin outside said housing;</u>

second means for biasing said free end of said locking pin towards a second release position within said housing;

said first bias means selectably operable by a user in a manner to remove said bias of said first bias means on said locking pin, whereby said second bias means urges said locking pin free end towards said second <u>release</u> position within said housing, a placement of said latching mechanism along the first shank with the second shank nested therein joining the first and second shanks upon said movement of said locking pin to said first normal locking position and in extension through aligned apertures of the first and second shanks, a user operation of said first bias means moving said locking pin to said second

release position and outside the aligned apertures for releasing said joined

shanks.

11. (Cancelled.)

12. (Currently amended) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim

[[11]] 10 wherein said second bias means comprises a second spring, said second spring

associated with said locking pin in a manner to urge said locking pin towards said second

release position.

13. (Currently amended) A latching mechanism <u>adapted</u> for coupling two nestable shanks in a selected extension therebetween, each shank having at least one aperture along a longitudinal extent thereof for alignment therebetween, said latching mechanism comprising:

a housing;

a locking pin having a free end for reciprocative ~~extension~~ <u>movement</u> between a

release position within said housing and a <u>normal</u> locking position ~~without~~

<u>outside</u> said housing:

first means for biasing said free end of said locking pin towards said release

position within said housing;

second bias means for biasing said free end of said locking pin towards said

locking position ~~without~~ <u>outside</u> said housing, said second bias means

<u>including a spring biased arm connected to said locking pin and</u> movable

between first and second positions, said <u>spring biased arm having a normal</u>

first position presenting a bias greater than said first bias means wherein said

~~second bias means~~ <u>spring biased arm</u> urges said free end of said locking pin

towards said <u>normal</u> locking position ~~without~~ <u>outside</u> said housing, said

second position of said ~~second bias means presenting~~ <u>spring biased arm</u>

<u>achieved by a user manipulation thereof to present</u> a bias <u>on said pin</u> less than

said first bias means wherein said first bias means urges said locking pin to

said release position within said housing;

said first position of said <u>spring biased arm of said</u> second bias means urging said locking pin through aligned apertures of the first shank and second nested shanks to join the first and second shanks, said ~~second bias means~~ second position <u>of said spring biased arm</u> allowing for displacement of the locking pin to a position ~~without~~ <u>outside</u> the aligned apertures to release the first and second shanks.

14. (Original) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 13 wherein said first bias means comprises a first spring coupled to said locking pin, a movement of said spring towards a normal position urging said locking pin to said release position.

15. (Cancelled.)

16. (Withdrawn) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 15 wherein said maintaining means comprises:

a slot in said housing, an end of said locking pin opposite said free locking end presented in said slot;

a wedge for movement in and out of said slot;

said second means biasing said wedge into said slot to a first position into contact with said locking pin opposite end in a manner to urge said spring away from said normal position, whereby to move said locking position to said locking position.

17. (Withdrawn) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 16 wherein said bias means comprises a second spring, said second spring at a normal position moving said wedge into said slot to said first position.

18. (Withdrawn) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 17 wherein said wedge is movable to a second position out of contact with said locking pin opposite end, said wedge at said second position allowing for said first spring to return to said normal position.

19. (Cancelled.)

20. (Withdrawn) The latching mechanism as claimed in claim 19 wherein said lever arm is user operable to displace said second end from said locking pin, whereby said first bias means urges said locking pin to said release position.